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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 003927

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON DEMOBILIZATION/REINSERTION PROCESS

REF: BOGOTA 02234

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) Since 2003, almost 5,000 members of the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) have demobilized. The last demobilization was the La Mojana Bloc on February 2, 2005. The GOC has begun to remedy the deficiencies in the reinsertion process. Almost 90 percent of demobilized paramilitaries have been entered into the electronic monitoring system and are participating in reinsertion programs. The GOC is working to address budget limitations and improve weak management. The OAS verification mission is also almost out of funding (reftel). The Ministry of Interior and Justice's Reincorporation Office is able to utilize the Presidency's "Peace Fund" budget office, which allows for more flexible, efficient spending. President Uribe endorsed the Reincorporation Office's Director Juan David Angel as the lead on the program and gave him a seat in cabinet meetings. A continuing concern is the lack of employment opportunities for the demobilized. No new demobilizations are scheduled, but the GOC plans to demobilize the remaining 15,000 paramilitaries in 2005.

Reinsertion Moving Forward

2. (C) AUC bloc demobilizations follow three basic steps: (1) disarm and demobilize in a special demobilization zone, (2) report to a Reference and Orientation Center (CRO) to be interviewed by the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) and receive the first monthly stipend, and (3) begin reinsertion programs. Some demobilizations were better organized and provided more services than others. For example, some blocs were given national identification cards during the demobilization phase while others had to wait until they reported to the CRO. Since demobilizations began, the GOC has been working to fill gaps in the process:

-- CROs: The GOC has established CROs in the cities of Cucuta, Medellin, Cali, Monteria, Turbo, Bogota and one mobile CRO to service less populated areas. The GOC hopes to create nine more by the end of 2005. The Peace Commissioner's Office has turned over management of the CROs to the Ministry of Interior and Justice's (MOI/J) Reincorporation Office. The CROs in Cucuta, Turbo, and Monteria are well run and have been fully staffed by the Fiscalia, tracking and monitoring staff, municipal liaison officers, OAS, and other relevant agencies. Others, including the newest CRO in Cali, are much further behind and barely have a skeleton staff. The MOI/J and Peace Commissioner's Office recently held a meeting with all CRO directors to discuss how to make CRO operations more uniform and plan for a census of demobilized scheduled for late April.

-- Tracking and Monitoring: The International Organization for Migration (IOM), a USAID-grantee, designed a computer-based tracking and monitoring system for demobilized paramilitaries. The system issues an alert when a series of indicators show an individual is beginning to drop out of the reinsertion program. Tracking and monitoring officials conduct home visits to these at-risk persons. As of April 15, 87 percent (4,181) of all demobilized paramilitaries had been entered in the tracking and monitoring system.

-- Other statistics: 1,189 have completed the National Apprenticeship Agency's (SENA) basic course that assesses education level and provides an orientation to life skills. Fifty-five are in Ralito awaiting finalization of the Justice and Peace Law. Sixty-four have been killed (reftel). Eighty-two are in jail either for non-pardonable crimes they committed before demobilization or for any crimes they committed after demobilization. The Fiscalia has interviewed 2,318 (part of the pardon process) and the Department of Administrative Security (DAS, rough FBI equivalent) has given 2,114 judicial passage (a certificate verifying that they are not wanted for any crimes). None, however, have been officially pardoned under Law 782, which allows the GOC to pardon demobilized for membership in an illegal armed group

and related, minor crimes.

Problems Remain

13. (C) Limited resources and poor interagency management continue to cause delays in issuance of reinsertion benefits.

In early April, a large group of former guerrillas and paramilitaries from the individual deserter program temporarily took over the MOI/J's Reincorporation Offices to demand their benefits. They were persuaded to leave the offices without violence but the demobilized continue to complain about the program, especially lack of employment. The GOC has taken some steps to resolve these problems, but progress has been slow:

-- Tight budget: The MOI/J's Reincorporation Office's 2005 budget is CP 71 billion (roughly USD 29.5 million), the Peace Commissioner's demobilization budget is CP 47 billion (roughly USD 19.6 million), and the Defense Ministry's budget for individual deserters is CP 28 billion (roughly USD 11.6 million). In order to make spending more efficient and flexible, each agency is going to put the Presidency's Peace Fund in charge of its budget. This should help ease delays in allocation of resources. However, the Reincorporation Office has warned that it has enough funding to cover basic reinsertion costs but not enough for productive employment projects unless outside assistance is provided.

-- Coordination: In early April, President Uribe called a meeting with Reincorporation Director Angel, Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo, and other cabinet members to discuss problems with the demobilization/reinsertion process. Uribe emphasized that reincorporation was a key GOC mission and endorsed Angel as having the lead. Angel will now attend all cabinet meetings. In the past, Angel had complained that he did not have sufficient political weight to direct the dozen or so state agencies involved in demobilization to provide services in a timely manner.

-- Employment generation: Some demobilized have temporary municipal jobs but the majority remain unemployed. The private sector has provided few opportunities, although some organizations, such as the National Cattle Rancher's Association, have expressed interest in doing so. President Uribe announced that he would begin requiring all government public works contracts to include some jobs for the demobilized. He directed Angel to find an experienced, well-connected businessman to serve as a liaison between the private sector and the Reincorporation Program. The Ambassador gave a speech to the American Business Council of Colombia on April 15 and urged them to get involved.

OAS Out of Funding

14. (C) The OAS verification mission faces similar budget problems. Funding from USAID and the Dutch and Swedish Governments will run out in June. Mission Director Sergio Caramagna has said he may be forced to shut down his offices without more assistance. On April 15, Caramagna briefed the G-24 countries on the peace process and the OAS mission's role. He emphasized that, although the peace process was not perfect, it had already removed almost 5,000 paramilitaries from the battlefield and had the potential to remove several thousand more. He pointed out that OAS verification would make the process more legitimate and help prevent former paramilitaries from returning to another illegal armed group.

Caramagna sent a similar message to the OAS Permanent Council in March. Thus far, only the Swedish and Dutch have expressed interest in further supporting the mission. Both countries brought in outside consultants to evaluate assistance to date and recommend if it should continue.

No More Demobilizations Planned

15. (C) Since the debate began on the Law for Justice and Peace, there have been no more demobilizations and talks have been in a holding pattern. Restrepo has held at least two negotiation sessions with the AUC since February, but they have been heated and not resulted in concrete agreements. The AUC has complained that the Justice and Peace Law does not provide enough legal guarantees. Some commanders have threatened to break off negotiations if they are not satisfied with the conditions of the peace process. Many of the remaining AUC groups are led by commanders heavily involved in drug trafficking who have been reluctant to demobilize. Nevertheless, the GOC continues to say it will demobilize all of the remaining 15,000 AUC members before the end of Uribe's term. The principle AUC groups left to demobilize include:

-- Central Bolivar Bloc (BCB): includes the Liberators of the South and the Vanquishers of Arauca; powerful in the eastern

plains, the southern Pacific Coast, and the Magdalena River valley.

-- Pacific Bloc: Led by Diego Murrillo; powerful on the coast of Cauca and Valle del Cauca Department.

-- Centauros Bloc: splintered into at least two groups since Bloc commander Miguel Arroyave was killed but is still active in the eastern plains.

-- Northern Bloc: led by Jorge 40; active in Cesar, Magdalena, and La Guajira Departments.

-- Middle Magdalena Self Defense Forces: led by Ramon Isaza, who has been reluctant to demobilize given his mistrust of other AUC commanders.

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